

## BOOK REVIEW

*Pediatric Oncology: Clinical Practice and Controversies.* By C.R. Pinkerton, and P.N. Plowman. 2nd Edition + 736 pp. Chapman and Hall, 1997. \$184.95 (hard cover).

The editors state their goal to be an overview of pediatric oncology from a European perspective, but happily, information in the field is rapidly passed around the world, minimizing differences in practice between Europe and the other continents. Nonetheless, Drs. Pinkerton and Plowman have produced a quality textbook, even if they have not quite met the standard they set for themselves.

Part one "Scientific and Diagnostic Principles" presents a nice introduction to the foundation on which the science of pediatric oncology is built. Individual chapters on epidemiology, genetics, pathology, radiation biology, chemotherapy, and clinical trial design are all well written and quite informative. Considering the attention given to new technologies such as fractionated stereotactic radiation therapy, and the multileaf collimator, it was disappointing that these issues did not receive more attention.

Part two "Diagnosis and Management of Individual Cancers" presents each disease from both a biological and historical perspective prior to a discussion of therapy. The individual chapters are for the most part well written. There are, however, some opportunities lost. For example, in the chapter on acute myeloid leukemia, data are presented that demonstrate improved survival on European protocols designated BFM 83 and MRC AML-10 compared to the results in America. These data beg for a detailed discussion of drug combinations and dose intensity that might serve to highlight the European perspective. In this case the entire discussion is limited to two paragraphs.

In the chapter on acute lymphoblastic leukemia, it would have been appropriate to cite Dana-Farber Cancer Center studies, the results of which are as promising as any published to date (Schorin MA, et al. *J Clin Oncol* 12:740-7, 1994). Although the BFM studies were presented in a thorough fashion, no attempt was made to contrast that approach to other strategies.

By contrast, the chapter on Wilms tumor highlights the differences in the timing of definitive surgery. In a thoughtful discussion covering three pages the authors present both sides of the immediate vs. delayed surgery argument, and make a strong case for the European perspective.

The chapter on retinoblastoma is thorough and well presented. It is disappointing however, in a text entitled in part "controversies" that the issue of chemotherapy for intraocular disease did not receive more in-depth attention. It would have been helpful if the authors, who are

responsible in good part for the seminal work for that approach, had provided us with an evaluation of its status vis-à-vis conventional treatments, and outlined the controversies regarding the most suitable patients for that strategy. It is worrisome that the use of cyclosporine is presented as advantageous when it has not been tested in a prospective randomized fashion.

The chapter on Tumours of the Central Nervous System could be improved. The chapter is illustrated exclusively with computed tomography images. With the widespread use of magnetic resonance imaging, which provides more information, a number of the illustrations could have been updated. Some of the comments regarding radiotherapy seem a bit insular. The chapter recommends daily fractions of 150-175cGy. In the United States Children's Cancer Group the most common fraction is 180cGy. Thus, the authors could have either broadened the definition of the usual dose, or used the opportunity as a point of discussion. Similarly, the statement that the total dose to the brain stem should not exceed 40-45 Gy could have been contrasted with the standard use of 50-59.4 Gy in the U.S.

The third section, Advances in Therapy, Late Effects, and Supportive Care provides nice reviews on issues relating to the use of high dose therapy with stem cell support, new agents, and targeted therapy. Long-term issues such as endocrine, cardiac, and neurologic sequelae are well presented. One area in which the Europeans are well ahead of their North American colleagues is in hospice care, and the chapter on Care of the Dying Child is an excellent introduction to the field.

In general the text is well illustrated. All chapters include useful tables containing diagnostic or therapeutic information. This is best illustrated in chapter 12 where table 12.8 includes a comprehensive review of efforts to reduce therapy for Hodgkin disease. Most chapters are nicely supplemented with photomicrographs of relevant histology as well as illustrative clinical photographs and radiographs. The index is thorough and pleasantly free of excessive cross references.

In summary, Drs. Pinkerton and Plowman and their colleagues have written an excellent text, but their attempt to present a unique European perspective was most difficult to achieve, given the present rapid world-wide communication. For those buying a first text, *Principles and Practice of Pediatric Oncology, 3rd ed.* by Phillip Pizzo and David Poplack (Lippincott, 1997) is more thorough; Pinkerton and Plowman more succinct.

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